

WASHINGTON—Today, U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL) co-hosted a Judiciary Committee forum on closing the gun show loophole. The discussion focused on The Gun Show Loophole Closing Act of 2009, which would eliminate a gap in federal law that allows private gun dealers to sell weapons to anyone—including terrorists, felons, and the mentally disabled—without performing background checks.

“We, as a society, agree that there are three groups of people who should never ever be allowed to buy guns in the United States—terrorists, felons, and the mentally ill,” said Quigley.

“Yet inexplicably, any of them can walk into a gun show tomorrow and buy a firearm. With the constitutional parameters firmly now in place, what’s at stake is no longer the second amendment, but the lives of children like those at Columbine, Virginia Tech and in Chicago who walk to school through gang-infested neighborhoods each and every day.”

The full text of Quigley’s opening statement can be found below and video is available [here](#) .

According to the Bureau for Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, 54,000 illegally trafficked guns were linked to gun shows and flea markets in a two-year period. A survey conducted by Republican pollster Frank Luntz revealed 69 percent of National Rifle Association (NRA) members and 85 percent of non-NRA gun owners support requiring criminal background checks on all purchasers at gun shows.

Panelists from the forum included Tom Mauser, the father of Columbine High School shooting victim Daniel Mauser and Colin Goddard, a survivor of the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007. Three of the four guns used at Columbine were bought at a gun show. Prior to the forum, Quigley met with Goddard in his office to discuss the importance of passing The Gun Show Loophole Closing Act.

As a member of the Judiciary Committee, Quigley played an instrumental role in staging the forum. In his 15 months in Congress, Quigley has co-authored [an editorial](#) with Mayor Richard M. Daley on the urgency to allow Chicago to govern its own streets, called for the reinstatement of the assault weapons ban (which expired in 2004), and [spoken on the House floor in support of common-sense gun control](#).

Full text of Quigley's opening statement:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Before I begin, on a personal note, I've only been here about 15 months, so I want to thank my colleagues who have been fighting here before I got here on this important issue.

On a personal note, before I came here I was a professor at Roosevelt University and Loyola and after the tragedy at Virginia Tech, we had a tragedy in Illinois at Northern Illinois University.

And I was teaching at that moment and I had 40 students instantly look at their Blackberries. They were getting warnings because it went out through our university and at Loyola there were police cars everywhere.

So at first, students didn't know what was happening to them. It could have been happening there. That's what struck home to them.

We talked about it and the most common reaction was, "What would we do?" You're trapped. There's only one way out of a classroom and there's really nothing they can do.

For students, and as a parent of two children in colleges, you ought to think that in a high school or a college that your kids are safe and that if you're a student, that you're safe. So I know that we can't ensure that 100 percent but as my colleagues have said, we can do some common sense things to reduce the chances of such a tragedy.

When the Supreme Court struck down Chicago's long-standing hand-gun ban a few weeks ago, it made an extraordinarily important and critical clarification in doing so. The Court pointedly noted that the right to bear arms is not an unlimited right. It reiterated that communities can keep guns away from schools, and out of the hands of felons, terrorists and the mentally ill.

But the gun show loophole makes a mockery of sensible prohibitions like these. As the tragedy at Columbine a decade ago and the recent Pentagon shooting illustrate, this loophole is big enough to drive a truck through.

As we heard earlier and we'll know more today, a gun show audit conducted by the mayor of New York revealed that 74 percent of sellers approached by investigators completed sales to people who appeared to be criminals or straw purchasers.

This is simply unacceptable; and we are here today because reasonable minds on both sides of the aisle feel that in their gut. Unfortunately, powerful lobbies and special interests have held this bill hostage for too long.

Today, their rhetoric must be recognized for what it is: extremist. For there is another

undeniable truth that came from the Supreme Court's invalidation of Chicago's gun ban. With a clearly established individual right to own a gun in the home that applies to state and federal governments alike, no longer can reasonable gun control bills be mischaracterized as one measure in a slippery slope toward the revocation of all gun-owning rights.

That tired old tune had been played for the last time. With the constitutional parameters firmly now in place, the Gun Show Loophole Closing Act can only be characterized one way: as common sense. So I thank all for being here today and I look forward to listening.